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NEWSCOPE

THE WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR UNITED METHODIST LEADERS

GCFA Issues Statement on IOT Report and Connectional Table Proposals

The Board of Directors of the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) met in Nashville recently in preparation for General Conference.

The council heard the report of an internal task group that reviewed the proposed legislation related to the Call to Action by the Connectional Table. GCFA's members voted to support the principles of the Call to Action plan and urge delegates to devise a structure for the denomination that:

- provides for an independent financial and administrative agency working on behalf of the General Conference
- retains the separate legal structure that will protect as much as possible the assets of the Church from joint liability,
- includes plans for retaining the tax-exempt ruling for the Church in the United States,
- allows for inclusive representation in the decision-making of the Church,
- clearly addresses the findings of the Call to Action report

Council member Jim Windham, chairperson of GCFA's internal task group, said, "The group commends the IOT for its diligent and faithful efforts to develop a new structure for the general Church. However, we felt as members of GCFA we had a duty to voice a number of concerns about the proposal." The GCFA task group report is available [here](#).

Asked to respond on behalf of the Call to Action Interim Operations Team, Bishop Gregory V. Palmer and Neil Alexander said, "We have just seen the GCFA material and we are gratified by the strong endorsement of the Call to Action report, particularly the affirmation of the need to focus much of the church's time and resources on assuring an increase in the number of vital congregations. Of course, the Connectional Table legislative petitions will be perfected during General Conference. We have taken note of concerns raised in the GCFA report, and we are eager to suggest ways to address them that hold fast to the primary objectives of the Call to Action emphasis that have been so widely supported.

"We look forward to working collaboratively with all who want most of all to find practical solutions that allow the UMC to move forward with vigor and confidence to embrace necessary changes and fulfill our shared mission." —Newscope

Wisconsin Delegation Statement

The Wisconsin Annual Conference delegation to General Conference has issued the following statement regarding pending legislation:

"The Wisconsin Annual Conference delegation affirms the need for our denomination to seriously consider necessary changes to its structure, its leadership development and credentialing processes, its financial stewardship, its faithfulness, and its relationship to the larger global church. We acknowledge and appreciate the hard work done thus far by our bishops and the various agencies and study teams to produce the Call to Action, the Study of Ministry, the Interim Operations Team report, and other proposals for change within The UMC, but we have reservations that the current recommendations will produce the intended results. Among our concerns:

- decisions about structure should be based on missional priorities and outcomes: form must follow function and it is currently unclear what outcomes the proposed structure would enable us to achieve more effectively;
- the absence of a spiritual-center to the process of determining our future is troubling—we would encourage a greater emphasis on prayer, fasting, Christian conference, reflective discernment, and scriptural study;

- there is not a clear explanation of how the proposed cuts will truly benefit the church in the long-term, just an assumption that we can do more, better with less—we would like to see more strategy and less assumptions;
- core questions of identity and purpose are being ignored in favor of structure, policies and image; the assumption seems to be that systemic change isn't necessary as long as we can rearrange parts of the existing system—we would encourage a clarity about our identity and purpose guiding our decisions about what to keep and what to eliminate;
- a hierarchical, non-representative structure seems antithetical to the values and nature of The UMC—*how* we work must reflect *who* we truly are;
- the issues of guaranteed appointment and ordination process are symptomatic of deeper dysfunction in our leadership credentialing and support system; creating conference level positions and a culture of call do not adequately address deeper issues—we must improve our processes of discernment and assessment rather than seek remedial solutions;
- our current trends toward counting—worship attendance, professions of faith, numbers of small groups, etc.—provide an unbalanced approach to evaluation and confuse size with health. Qualitative metrics and holistic definitions of health and vitality are needed. Confusing “people who attend worship” with “disciples” is deeply problematic;
- ‘discipleship’ is lifted as our focus and goal, yet most of the recommendations do nothing to help define what we mean by discipleship or how the changes will equip our congregations to create sustainable and effective systems for disciple-cultivation;

“We acknowledge the need to make significant changes in a very short timeframe, but the current reports and recommendations create more questions than they answer. Our delegation will actively seek alternatives to the current recommendations and encourage dialogue and discernment that will offer short-term relief while allowing us adequate time to discover or create long-lasting, sustainable solutions to our deepest problems.”

—*Wisconsin Annual Conference Delegation to General Conference*

GBPHB Board of Directors Approves Investment Resolution

On Mar. 7, the board of directors of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The UMC (GBPHB) announced the approval of a resolution regarding investing in securities of certain companies doing business in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Read the full text of the resolution [here](#).

On Mar. 2, GBPHB unanimously approved the resolution presenting the board's overall position on General Conference 2012 petitions directing that all UM general boards and agencies immediately divest securities held in Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions and Hewlett-Packard. These companies (among others) supply products that the petition sponsors have stated are used by the Israeli government to violate the human rights of Palestinians.

In keeping with its prior investment position and the approach taken in previous board actions, the board evaluated extensive information received from voices within The UMC dedicated to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The board reviewed information provided by the UM Kairos Response, reviewed and concurred with the report of the UMC Socially Responsible Investment Task Force (established by General Conference 2008), and reviewed and prayerfully considered the directives of *The Book of Discipline* for discharging its fiduciary role in establishing and implementing investment policy and managing investment funds. The board resolved that the values shared as a denomination must continue to be reflected in its stewardship of the church's financial resources.

GBPHB's board of directors affirmed the decision of its Fiduciary and UMC Principles Committees to retain the securities of Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions, and that GBPHB staff will continue to urge these companies to protect and respect human rights, and to continue to seek a remedy for any human rights violations including, but not limited to, Palestine.

Tim Smith, a member of the board of directors' UMC Principles Committee and an executive at Walden Asset Management, an investment firm active in shareholder advocacy, represented the board's viewpoint: “The board of directors strongly believes that divesting of stock in a company where you have a dispute is not an effective tool to impact a company's policy or practices. If you sell stock as a protest, another investor simply purchases it. As an investor, having a seat at the table with a company has generally proved to be a more powerful means of communicating with a company's management.”

GBPHB's board of directors continues to commend the work of faithful UMs to bring about a lasting peace in the Middle East and continues to pray for an end to human rights abuses throughout the world. The GBPHB board of directors' resolution summarizes the rationale, evaluative process of the board committees, and the ongoing actions with the targeted companies in which GBPHB invests. —*GBPHB*

General Conference App Launched

Mobile device users will be able to track legislation, watch videos and follow news at the 2012 General Conference through a new, free mobile application from UM Communications. Instructions for downloading the app are [online](#). —UMNS

The Changing Face of Mission

The face of missionaries has changed, with nearly 50% of UM missionaries coming from outside the United States. “We now have missionaries who are coming from everywhere and going everywhere,” said Thomas Kemper, who leads the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM).

Patterns of service are vastly different in the 21st century than in the 19th or 20th centuries, particularly as the center of Christian gravity has shifted to Africa. While the approach might look different, the need for professional mission service has not changed. “The universal gospel of Jesus always transcends any cultural context,” said Kemper. “The tension in all mission work is to proclaim a universal gospel that is incarnated in a local context and is relevant in this place and time.”

With these new understandings come new challenges to develop paradigms that reflect current realities. GBGM organized a two-day mission roundtable that included a cross-section of missionaries, staff, faith partners, business partners, and missiologists. The meeting was held Feb. 27–28, at Drew University in Madison, N.J.

The goal of the roundtable was “to articulate the guiding principles for missionary service in order to formulate, revise, and implement strategies and policies.” The more than 50 participants spent time in daily worship and heard diverse educational speakers and personal testimonies. They also engaged in small groups and consensus-building exercises, exploring and prioritizing core values of missionary service, including compensation, financial sustainability, and missionary care and support.

The meeting also allowed the missionaries to discuss concerns and strengthen relationships with the GBGM headquarters staff. All the participants affirmed the importance of globally diverse missionaries and the related need for a process that supports them.

A significant portion of the meeting addressed practical issues such as the declining budgets of general agencies in contrast with the desire to increase missionary presence. Different models of compensation and benefits were explored in various contexts and perspectives. The words “creative” and “sacrifice” emerged as common reference points in these discussions.

[Covenant Relationships](#) are the most important source of missionary support. Only about 25% of missionary support comes from local church World Service apportionments. As more churches partner with missionaries, Global Ministries will be able to send more missionaries out into the world to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

According to Judy Chung, head of the missionary services unit of GBGM, the roundtable set the foundation for a series of steps that will be taken to develop guiding principles relating to UM missionaries.

While acknowledging a practical need for new institutional structures and policies, Kemper reminded the group that “at the heart of what we are all doing is serving God’s mission. Let us continue to be a discipleship movement shaped for mission.” —Melissa Hinnen, GBGM

Better Child Nutrition Brings Economic Gain

Four years ago, a British medical journal presented concrete proof that nations that don’t invest in proper nutrition for pregnant and lactating women and their infants will suffer economically as a result. That research has prompted governments, relief agencies and advocacy groups to create a new anti-poverty focus, and faith groups, including UMs, are joining the effort.

• GLOBAL HEALTH •

The “1000 Days” partnership—referring to the time between a woman’s pregnancy and her child’s 2nd birthday—was launched “to help raise awareness of this new knowledge,” explained Asma Lateef of Bread for the World, the hunger advocacy organization that has helped lead the faith-based response.

Participation in 1000 Days is a natural fit for the UM Committee on Relief (UMCOR), said June Kim, executive secretary for world hunger/poverty and sustainable agriculture and development. “UMCOR has always worked to provide nutrition,” she explained. “For us, food is the first medicine.”

Many nongovernmental organizations and governments are “on the same page” when it comes to assessing this data, added Maurice Bloem, deputy director of Church World Service (CWS). “Everybody is talking now about the thousand days, the importance of working with these kids and mothers.”

CWS already has shifted its organizational focus to hunger and malnutrition, Bloem said, as the result of a visioning process initiated by its top executive, the Rev. John McCullough, a UM pastor. The organization is recognized for its [CROP Hunger Walk](#), which raises money for local and global hunger and poverty initiatives.

The launch of the 1000 Days partnership in 2010 coincided with a plan for “Scaling Up Nutrition,” endorsed by more than 100 government, civil society, academic and business organizations. What is referred to as the [SUN Framework](#) outlines core priorities and actions and provides a structure for national plans.

Churches can engage in campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood nutrition and collaborate with governments and nongovernmental organizations, says. Find information and ideas at [1000 Days](#).

—Linda Bloom, *UMNS*

GBHEM Names 2012–2013 Dempster Scholars

Eight students have been selected by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) as the next class of Dempster Scholars. The Dempster Graduate Fellowship supports doctoral students who are committed to serving the church by becoming professors who will educate the next generation of UM pastors. The fellowships are funded by the Ministerial Education Fund through GBHEM's Division of Ordained Ministry.

The award is named for the Rev. John Dempster, a pioneer in UM theological education. Converted at a Methodist camp meeting in 1812, he preached in New York, served as a missionary in Argentina, and founded Boston University School of Theology and Garrett Biblical Institute (now Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary) in Evanston, Ill.

Of the eight Dempster Scholars, two are studying at Vanderbilt University, and the others are studying at Drew University, Duke University, Emory University, Harvard Divinity School, Rice University, and Southern Methodist University. They were chosen by a Selection Committee composed of faculty from the UM seminaries.

Scholars' fields of study range from biblical studies to Christian ethics to preaching, liturgy and sacred music to historical theology, and mission. “Doctoral programs take time and money. We, in the church, want these scholars to succeed; we want them to complete their studies and train other leaders; therefore, we assist them with both prayer and financial resources,” said the Rev. Rena Yocom, assistant general secretary for Clergy Formation and Theological Education. Awards—based on the student's academic achievement, their commitment to Christian ministry and their promise as educators—carry a value of up to \$10,000 annually, with a maximum of \$30,000 over a five-year period.

The 2012–2013 Dempster Graduate Fellowship recipients are Carolyn Davis (Texas Annual Conference), Darius Hills (Louisiana Annual Conference), Amy Beth Jones (Upper New York Annual Conference), Sangwoo Kim (New England Annual Conference), Gerald Liu (Mississippi Annual Conference), Michelle Morris (Arkansas Annual Conference), Adam Ployd (Virginia Annual Conference) and Jennifer Quigley (West Ohio Annual Conference).

To learn more about the Dempster Fellowships, visit www.gbhem.org/dempsterfellowship. To donate to the endowment online, visit www.umhef.org. —Vicki Brown, GBHEM

States Urged to Reject Private Prison Offer

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) is included in a coalition of 60 policy and religious groups that urged states to reject a recent offer by the nation's largest private prison company to buy and privatize state prisons. Three letters sent to governors in every state addressed a recent offer by Corrections Corporation of America to buy prisons now run by state officials. The three letters came from 32 groups, including GBCS, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Presbyterian Criminal Justice Network. Read the letters [online](#).

Forthcoming Events

Observe Native American Ministries Sunday on Apr. 22, or give online anytime. Native American Ministries Sunday is one of the six churchwide Special Sundays with offerings. The special offering provides scholarships for Native Americans who plan to be ordained as clergy in The UMC and are attending UM schools of theology and other schools approved by the University Senate of The UMC. To learn more about Native American Ministries Sunday, order resources or donate online, visit www.umcgiving.org/nativeamerican.

Editor: Mary Catherine Dean
Managing Editor: Barbara Dick
Publisher: Neil M. Alexander

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